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ALEA Joins ‘Operation Clear Track’ Rail-Safety Initiative

MONTGOMERY — The Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA) has joined forces with law enforcement agencies across the U.S. and Canada once again this year for “Operation Clear Track” — the single largest rail-safety law-enforcement initiative in North America.

Coordinated by [Amtrak Police](#) and [Operation Lifesaver Inc \(OLI\)](#), Operation Clear Track aims to reduce the approximately 2,000 serious injuries and deaths each year in the U.S. around railroad tracks and trains. The event is held during the annual observance of [Rail Safety Week](#), which began on Monday, Sept. 20 and runs through Sunday, Sept. 26.

ALEA Secretary Hal Taylor said, “Operation Clear Track is an important initiative utilized by ALEA Troopers to educate pedestrians, cyclists and drivers across the state about the various ways they can stay safe around train tracks in order to avoid a serious injury or worse. We are pleased to take part in this nationwide enforcement and safety awareness campaign to help save lives and keep our communities safe.”

ALEA Troopers have been stationed at railroad grade crossings and other various locations across the state to distribute educational materials to citizens throughout Rail Safety Week. ALEA offers the following railroad crossing safety tips for drivers and pedestrians:

- Freight trains don’t travel at fixed times, and schedules for passenger trains often change. Always expect a train at each highway-rail intersection at any time.
- All train tracks are private property. Never walk on tracks; it’s illegal trespassing and highly dangerous. It takes the average freight train traveling at 55 mph more than a mile—the length of 18 football fields—to stop. Trains cannot stop quickly enough to avoid a collision.
- The average locomotive weighs about 400,000 pounds or 200 tons. This makes the weight ratio of a car to a train proportional to that of a soda can to a car. We all know what happens to a soda can hit by a car.
- Trains have the right of way 100% of the time over emergency vehicles, cars, the police and pedestrians.
- A train can extend three feet or more beyond the steel rail, putting the safety zone for pedestrians well beyond the three-foot mark. If there are rails on the railroad ties, always assume the track is in use, even if there are weeds or the track looks unused.

- Trains can move in either direction at any time. Sometimes its cars are pushed by locomotives instead of being pulled, which is especially true in commuter and light rail passenger service.
- Today's trains are quieter than ever. Any approaching train is always closer, moving faster, than you think.
- Remember to cross train tracks ONLY at designated pedestrian or roadway crossings and obey all warning signs and signals posted there.
- Stay alert around railroad tracks. Refrain from texting, headphones or other distractions that would prevent you from hearing an approaching train; never mix rails and recreation.

For more safety tips for pedestrians, click [here](#). For more safety tips for drivers, click [here](#).

For more information about Rail Safety Week, Operation Clear Track, and other rail-safety initiatives and tips, visit www.oli.org.